



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Carlsbad Caverns
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Carlsbad Caverns News Release

For Immediate Release
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Join Carlsbad Caverns in August for Breakfast, Bats and Shooting Stars


For many of us, it's been years since we've "pulled an all- nighter," but the staff of Carlsbad Caverns National Park are proposing to do just that! Starting the evening of August 12, sandwiched between the summer's nightly Bat Flight program and the park's 48th annual Bat Flight Breakfast, the park will be hosting a star party along with help from the Living Desert Zoo and Gardens State Park and area astronomers.

"We really started working on the star party idea during the closeout for last year's Bat Flight Breakfast," said Avelina Childress, the breakfast's coordinator. "The stars and shooting stars were just amazing. We thought the timing would be perfect to have both the breakfast and our first- ever star party."

As it turns out, the timing is perfect—the Perseid meteor shower will be at its peak on August 12 and 13. This meteor shower is a spectacular astronomy fireworks show—and is the most reliable, with an average of 50 to 100 meteors per hour. In addition, Mars will come within 34,649,589 miles of Earth, and except for the moon, will be the brightest object in the night sky. Star party programs are set to begin at 9:30 p.m. after the evening's Bat Flight program, which begins at dusk. Telescopes will be provided and overnight parking will be allowed. If desired, visitors may bring their own telescopes. Star party programming will continue until 3 a.m.

Staying up all night can make you hungry, so beginning at 5 a.m., breakfast will be served at the Bat Flight Breakfast. The breakfast was started in the late 1950s by park employees who wanted visitors to witness the spectacular morning return flight of the Mexican free- tailed bats to the Cavern. Normally held on the second Thursday in August, park staff moved the event to Saturday to encourage more participants and to coincide with the meteor shower. Since then, the breakfast has become a tradition, attracting 300 to 500 spectators.

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The event gives visitors the opportunity to watch the bats return to Carlsbad Cavern after a night of foraging for insects—the Cavern’s bat colony, estimated at 300,000 bats, is capable of eating literally tons of insects a night. Before entering the cavern in the morning, the bats circle several hundred feet overhead and then dive in clusters into the cavern entrance. Unlike the shorter nighttime exodus out of the cave when the bats spiral up and leave the cave *en masse*, the sunrise return to the cave normally spans several hours.

This year’s breakfast will include cold cereal; ham, turkey and cheese croissants; yogurt and fruit; and juice, milk and coffee. The price of the breakfast is \$7.00 for adults and \$3.00 for children age 12 and under and will be served by National Park Service employee volunteers near the bat flight amphitheater. Park rangers will also provide interpretive information about park’s bat colony and their early morning return to the Cavern. The first 120 visitors will be treated to a lantern tour in Carlsbad Cavern via the natural entrance. Entrance to the self- guided portions of the Cavern will be free to all Bat Flight Breakfast participants.

The annual breakfast is sponsored by the Carlsbad Caverns Activity Association and Cavern Supply Company in cooperation with the National Park Service and the Carlsbad Caverns Guadalupe Mountains Association.

For star party information, contact Shannan Marcak at 505.785.3134. For Bat Flight Breakfast information, contact Avelina Childress at 505.785.3124 or Bridget Litten at 505.785.3024, or visit the park’s website at www.nps.gov/cave/.

- NPS-

July 1, 2005

Editors: Attached is a timeline of the evening’s events. A more detailed timeline will be sent out as we receive more information.

Star Party/Bat Flight Breakfast

Sunset: 7:55
Moon: Sets just before midnight
Sunrise: 6:12

7:30	Parking lot for star party is opened Parking lot for cars and overnight parking opened Visitors may set up telescopes at anytime
7:15- 7:30	Evening Bat Flight program begins (estimated time)
8:00- 8:30	Bats fly (estimated time)
8:45	Astronomer briefing and coordination
9:30	Dark Skies Program “Darkness as a Resource” by NPS
10:00	Moon gazing (binoculars and telescopes) using the designated parking lot
11:00	Tour of the Night Skies
12:00- 3:00	Moon sets Night sky viewing of Perseid meteor shower using telescopes in the designated parking lot
3:00	Ranger led Desert Night Hike
4:45	Ranger bat flight program at breakfast area
5:00	Bat Flight Breakfast begins
5:00- 5:45	Bats return to Bat Cave (estimated time)
6:30	First ranger- led lantern tour of the natural entrance
7:00	Climbing demonstration at Cavern entrance Second ranger- led lantern tour of the natural entrance
8:00	Visitor Center and Carlsbad Cavern open to all visitors

(All times are Mountain Daily Time)